

# Vail, Dreamer and Executive: Yankee Views British Industry

## Railway Policies Careful Analysis of National Problem

THE AMERICAN RAILROAD PROBLEM. By J. Leo Schaffman. Published by the Century Company. \$2.

THE problem of the proper regulation of our vast railroad system has been impinging upon the rather apathetic American national consciousness with increasing vigor during the last generation. Our railroads were built up under the ordinary system of unrestricted private initiative and it is only by painfully slow processes that we have come to realize that this great industry, essentially monopolistic in its nature and absolutely essential to national prosperity, demands careful and thoroughgoing governmental regulation for its successful functioning.

Professor Schaffman has made a constructive, well informed and extremely valuable contribution to the popular understanding of America's transportation problem. The book is, first of all, a digest of important facts relating to the subject. The history of the railroads is set forth; the provisions of the Cummins-Esch bill are exhaustively described, and various schemes for post-war railroad reconstruction, from the Plumb plan to the projects of the railway executives and the railway security holders, are fairly and impartially paraphrased.

The author also offers some well reasoned personal conclusions on the subject. He feels that many of the difficulties of railway administration in the past, especially in the field of labor relations, may be ascribed to the general failure to appreciate the necessity for providing some form of continuous machinery for settling differences between management and employees. Labor crises were allowed to become serious before any serious attempts at settlement were made. "The chief contributions of Federal control toward the solution of the railroad problem must be found in its demonstration of the possibilities of unified operation, and of the advantages of constructive adjustment of labor relationships."

Like many other students of the railroad problem, Professor Schaffman believes that private ownership of the roads is being subjected to its final test.

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## "The Man Who Made Neighbors of a Hundred Million People"

An Intimate Narrative, Rivalling Romance, of the Life and Achievements of Theodore N. Vail

By Willis Fletcher Johnson

IN ONE MAN'S LIFE, Being Chapters from the Personal and Business Career of Theodore N. Vail. By Albert Bigelow Paine. Illustrated. Published by Harper & Brothers. Price \$3.

WHEN Mr. Paine wrote his admirable biography of Mark Twain he had to do with the grandiose visions of Colonel Sellers, extravagant beyond most fictional conceptions. In writing the present work he had still more to do with actual achievements of an actual man which immeasurably transcended the wildest flights of the imaginative Colonel. There are a few—very few—careers in American history comparable with that of Theodore Newton Vail; there is not one that surpasses his in what we may term the realization of romance. He had, it is true, a good start. His forbears and kin were people of pith and push, one of them being the engineer who built the engines that drove the first steamship across the Atlantic and some of the first American locomotives, and another being the aid of Morse in perfecting the electric telegraph. Then he was well read in childhood. Lads who were brought up on Abbott's "Franklin" stories, Stroh's "Porte Crayon" papers and De Mille's immortal "Dodge Club" had advantages which those of later days might vainly envy.

That he should take to telegraphy was the most natural thing in the world. But after a few years he was constrained to turn aside from it for a time to perform one of the greatest services in the history of our governmental administration. This was nothing less than the development of the railway mail service, including the railway postoffice and the fast mail trains. For many years we have been regarding that service as perhaps the most efficient of all rendered by the government, without remembering how it came into existence, and without thinking very much of the young man who, away back in the days of Cresswell and Jewell, rose from being an obscure postal clerk to be the general superintendent of a continent-wide organization unmatched in the world. Had he never done more than that he would have been entitled to honorable fame among great Americans.

From the rails, however, he swung back in time to the wires, not only of the telegraph but also of the telephone, which was then one of the world's startling novelties. Mr. Paine gives a most dramatic account of the early experiments and demonstrations of Bell and Watson and their colleagues, and if possible a still more fascinating story of the tedious struggles and conflicts which preceded the establishment of the great invention upon a prosperous commercial basis. It was a venturesome thing for Vail to resign his place at the head of the Railway Mail Service to try to make something out of Bell's "talking toy." The government did not like it. It did not want to

lose his services. "It's too bad," said "Uncle Joe" Cannon—who was still a young man and not yet of avuncular distinction—"it's too bad. I always liked Vail. Hubbard tried to sell me some of that stock. I'm sorry he got hold of a nice fellow like Vail." The First Assistant Postmaster General was more than sorry; he was fighting mad. He wrote to Vail:

"I can scarce believe that a man of your sound judgment, one who holds an honorable and far more responsible position than any man under the Postmaster General, with honor and respect attached to the same, should throw it up for a damned old Yankee notion (a piece of wire with two Texan steer horns attached to the ends, with an arrangement to make the concern bleat like a calf) called a telephone. I feel confident, if you do make the change, that in less than one year you will agree with me in saying you made a mistake."

Wasn't the illustrious Dionysius Lardner who demonstrated mathematically that no steamship could carry a big enough cargo of coal to feed the engines on a trip across the Atlantic? The story of the development of the "talking toy" into one of the greatest of all the mechanical equipments of civilization is so marvelous as to make us wonder if Aladdin and his lamp really merited the attention they received. Certainly if Vail's earliest American ancestors had predicted precisely what he actually brought to pass they would have been uncommonly lucky to escape prosecution for witchcraft or confinement as dangerous lunatics. When, as a crowning achievement, Vail stood in his office in New York and spoke into a transmitter words which were instantly audible by wire and by ether—at Panama and at Honolulu, and a little later one of his colleagues, speaking in New York, was similarly heard at the same instant at Honolulu and in Paris, the "talking toy" thus spanning more than one-third of the earth's circumference, there was good cause, as Morse had had, two generations before, to exclaim, "What hath God wrought!"

We may not here dwell upon Vail's vast enterprises with railroads and telegraphs and what-not else in South America; with his great Speedwell Farms in Vermont, named for the historic iron works of his grandfather at Morristown; of his innumerable benefactions, of his masterful and engaging personality in domestic, in social and in business life. Mr. Paine tells it all, far more than we may here so much as hint at, and tells it with unflinching sympathy and fascinating charm. It is a biography to be commended to every American boy for inspiration, to every American citizen for reminder of some of the finest achievements in American industrial history, to every reader for a practical tale of practical deeds in our own land and time, before which imagination stands at gaze, invention falters, romance seems commonplace.

## Marlborough

Career of Great General Described

MARLBOROUGH AND THE RISE OF THE BRITISH ARMY. By C. T. Atkinson. Published by G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$4.50.

THE character of the Duke of Marlborough has been unkindly treated both in history and in fiction. Macaulay, who could not forgive any one for disloyalty to his hero, William III, paints the duke's portrait in dark colors. And Thackeray, in "Henry Esmond," has perpetuated the popular impression of Marlborough as a great general but a mean and unlovable man.

Mr. Atkinson is inclined to dispute or at least to mitigate the censures of Marlborough's harsher critics. Admitting the culpability of the duke's intrigues with the exiled Stuarts, he calls attention to the low standard of political morality which prevailed at the time. He flatly denies the allegation that Marlborough deliberately prolonged the War of the Spanish Succession for the sake of personal gain.

The duke's bitter detractors could scarcely deny him a place among the great generals of all time; and the author brings out in clear relief the really notable qualities of heart and mind which accounted for such victories at Blenheim and Ramillies. Marlborough's victories over the French were far more than triumphs of strategy and tactics over the best troops and the most skillful leaders of Europe. They represent diplomatic as well as military successes. In order to secure maximum support in troops and supplies from the various members of the loose coalition against France, the duke was obliged to flatter, bribe and cajole, to reconcile a hundred jarring interests, to share authority with pompous and incompetent generals, like Louis of Baden, to frame his military plans in accordance with political exigencies.

No general ever owed less to his troops. Hannibal's hardened mercenaries possessed a distinct advantage over the raw Roman militia; the disciplined Prussian troops of Frederick the Great were far superior in fighting caliber to the forces of his adversaries; Napoleon was able to hurl the enthusiastic levies of revolutionary France against the spiritless feudal armies that were put into the field against him. But Marlborough was forced to oppose the splendid armies of France, fortified by a long, unbroken record of victory and acting under the orders of a single host, with the hetero-



FRANCES PARKINSON KEYES, wife of Senator Keyes (N. H.), author of "The Career of David Noble" (Stokes), a picture of a New England village

## The Lone Wolf

Tracking Down Stolen Jewels

ALIAS THE LONE WOLF. By Louis Joseph Vance. Published by Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.75.

THE Lone Wolf, reformed criminal and British secret service man, sets out for France with the purpose of going into hiding after a hazardous exploit which has made him many powerful enemies. But fate and Mr. Vance give him little chance for rest and seclusion. He almost immediately becomes involved in a chain of adventures which lead up to the theft of the famous Montezuma jewels from a chateau in southern France.

The beautiful owner of the jewels trusts the Lone Wolf, despite his questionable previous record; and, inspired by her confidence, he sets out to recover the gems. The trail first leads to Paris, where the hero narrowly escapes being strangled by a villainous Apache, who hobs up periodically throughout the story.

Finally he embarks on a yacht cruise across the Atlantic with the gang that has actually secured possession of the jewels. Of course one never doubts that the Lone Wolf will somehow conjure the jewels out of the safe and escape from the yacht scot free; but the readers' curiosity about the means to be employed in executing this coup is stimulated to the very end. He succeeds by throwing the whole mechanism of the yacht out of gear and taking advantage of the resulting confusion. The Lone Wolf must be pronounced as competent and as interesting in the paths of virtue as he formerly was in the paths of crime. And he is fortunate in possessing such a fascinating chronicler of his exploits as Mr. Vance.

## Woman at Home

HOUSEWIFERY. By Lydia Ray Baiders. Published by The J. B. Lippincott Company.

THIS handbook was written with a double purpose, to show women how to reduce tasks in the home and how to save time, money and energy. It reveals housewifery as a definite business, with an economy all its own. There is a basis of wide experience and study as a foundation for its chapters, and it gives useful facts relative to plumbing, heating and lighting, household supplies and furnishings, storage, cleaning and care of rooms, disinfectants and household pests. In these days when women have to divide their time between the home and outside interests this book, so rich in genuinely sound advice, is sure to be of daily service.



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## "Full Up and Fed Up" Seen as Dominant Mood of British Labor

An American Observer Tells of First-Hand Experiences in English Mines and Factories

FULL UP AND FED UP. By Whitney Williams. Published by Charles Scribner's Sons. \$2.50.

SOME time ago Mr. Williams put on a pair of overalls and knocked around a number of factories, doing unskilled jobs and collecting first-hand information about the American worker's state of mind. Now he has published the results of a similar tour through some of the greatest industrial districts of Great Britain. Mr. Williams's book must be considered from a literary as well as from a sociological standpoint. Gifted with a keen sense of observation and an excellent knack of story-telling, he succeeds admirably in stating the problems of the British workers whom he met in terms of human values. His narrative style is frank and realistic, with only occasional dashes to indicate the more unprintable remarks of his companions.

The illusion that Englishmen of all classes and parties speak with respect of the King is rudely dispelled by Mr. Williams, who reports remarks about his majesty, uttered by disgruntled workmen, which suggest the comments that an angry baseball crowd is apt to hurl in the direction of the umpire.

The author worked in a South Wales coal mine for a time. He found the miners pretty good fellows, despite their fondness for singing lustily about the revolution and their unwillingness to produce more than a minimum output of coal. Here, as in many other instances, Mr. Williams points out the invariable connection between tyrannical or inefficient management and impaired morale among the workers. The Welsh miners can scarcely complain now of being driven or abused; their union is strong enough to protect them. But they are still embittered by the memory of past injustice, by the antiquated equipment of the mines and by the reports of huge war profits made by the mine owners.

From South Wales Mr. Williams went to Glasgow, one of the great Scotch industrial centers. Here he found tam and rebellion rampant. Drunkenness was almost universal in the poorer quarters, and with it were associated poverty and radicalism. He diagnoses Glasgow's psychological ailments as a product of bad housing and the insecurity of jobs along the Clyde River.

The author came in contact with a more conservative element of English workers around Newcastle. Returning to London, he met many of the leaders of the British Labor party, who generally impressed him as sane, moderate men. His own conviction that the insecurity of the job is perhaps the most important psychological factor in the average worker's discontent was powerfully strengthened by the following epigrammatic observation of a labor leader:

"Irregular work always makes an irregular worker. And an irregular worker is always bound to be an irregular citizen."

Mr. Williams carries away two dominant convictions about the British worker's reaction to his environment. These convictions are aptly expressed in the phrase: Full up and fed up. In the first place, England is a country of few jobs. It is seldom that a man quits the social class into which he is born. The general instinct is to save what one has, rather than to reach out for more. In a country where it is difficult for a man out of work to find employment the job naturally assumes some of the aspects of a property right. The indiscrimi-

ination which has made its appearance in all the countries which bore the strain of the conflict and found themselves at its end not in paradise, but in a workaday world, with an increased cost of living. This mood of fatigue and irritation has found expression in numerous strikes and in widespread dissatisfaction, not only with the government and the employers, but with the more conservative labor leaders. The author believes that industrial tension in Great Britain would be relaxed if the idea of a fixed number of jobs could be discarded and if employers and workers would co-operate in stimulating new needs among buyers and additional production to satisfy these needs.

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"If Winter Comes" is more than a mere novel, it is an epic poem of very great beauty, and will last long after most other literary products of this age have gone to an obscure and unlamented grave."—Robert E. Sherwood in Life, New York.

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